

CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 35 – Socinianism, Unitarianism, and Modernism

1. *Distinctive Doctrines of Christianity*

- a. *the doctrine of the Trinity is the most distinctive of all Christian doctrines - this marks Christians off from the polytheistic heathen and distinguishes from the non-Christian monotheists (Judaism & Islam)*
- b. *the Creed of Nicaea the Church universal confessed its belief in the deity of Christ. To that creed subscribe not only all the Protestant churches worthy of the name, but also the Greek Eastern churches and the Roman Catholic Church, but the Socinians rejected the Nicene Creed*
- c. *The Congregationalists departed in one point of church government*
- d. *The Baptists rejected infant baptism*
- e. *Quakers, Pietists, and Moravians departed by placing a one-sided emphasis upon Christian life at the expense of Christian doctrine*
- f. *Arminianism with its doctrine of man's free will teaches that man has a part, the final, deciding part, in his salvation*

2. *Socinianism Denies the Trinity*

- a. *Socinianism receives its name from two Italians, Laelius Socinus and his nephew, Faustus Socinus; outwardly they conformed to the Catholic Church, they were nevertheless responsible for errors in doctrine which contradicted some of the basic truths held by that church*
- b. *The death of Servetus at the stake caused Laelius Socinus to give serious thought to the doctrine of the Trinity but did not publish his notes*
- c. *the nephew, Faustus the unpublished manuscripts of his uncle came into his hands greatly influenced his thought*
- d. *Socinus denied the deity of Christ, taught that Christ was only a man, though He was the best man who ever lived; attacked the doctrine that Christ's death on the cross was atonement for man's sins; denied the doctrine of total depravity (that man by nature is totally corrupt)*

3. *Socinianism Becomes Unitarianism*

- a. *In England during the eighteenth century Socinianism came to be called Unitarianism*
- b. *Theophilus Lindsey, a Socinian clergyman in the Episcopal Church of England, circulated a petition that clergymen might be relieved from the obligation to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles and pledge their fidelity to the Bible only*
- c. *He withdrew from the Episcopal Church and in 1774 organized a Unitarian Church in London*
- d. *English Unitarianism insisted on salvation by character rather than through the atoning blood of Christ, and claimed to reject "all creeds of human composition."*

4. *Modernism Rejects the Supernatural*

- a. *the Modernists place the mind of man above the Bible, and place reason above faith*
- b. *This attitude is an outgrowth of the spirit of modern science and philosophy*
- c. *The Modernists do not believe in the supernatural. They do not believe in miracles. Consequently they do not believe in the virgin birth and the deity of Christ. They do not believe in a special revelation from God and in an infallibly inspired Bible. They consider the Bible to be not a revelation of God, but a record of man. However, according to them it is a record not of the entire human race, but only of the religious ideas and experiences of the ancient Jews.*
- d. *Modernism is a departure from historic Protestantism. But it is much more. It is a definite break with historic Christianity all along the line. And it has invaded in greater or lesser degree most Protestant churches.*